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Gun Shows: The Social Construction of an Armed Event

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Introduction

Gun shows in America are complex events; they are many things to many people. They are economic and leisure events with historical, political and social components. As a vital part of the American gun culture, gun shows illustrate the beliefs, attitudes and activities which accompany the buying and selling of firearms and related items. As a social construct, gun shows have a history, a social structure, norms and values. For a variety of constituencies they are negotiated realities (Berger and Luckman, 1966)..

Historian Richard Hofstadler (1970) introduced the concept of America as a gun culture. Although the percentage of American homes in which a firearm is found has declined from about 50% in the 1970s to 43% in the 1990s to just 35% in the 2000s (Tavernise and Gebeloof, 2013), the number of guns in private hands was estimated at approximately 300 million in 2013 (Witkowski, 2013). Though this number is extensive, gun ownership is concentrated in a smaller number of citizens; Hepburn (2007) notes that 20% of gun owners own 65% of the nation's privately held firearms. However, not all researchers consider the rates of gun ownership to be commensurate with a gun culture (Lindgren and Heather, 2002). Nevertheless, Burbick (2006), in her classic *Gun Show Nation,* suggests that this segment of gun owners comprises the social core of the American gun culture and routinely attends multiple gun shows each year. Burdick (2006) also notes that the core gun culture is typically composed of white males who attend guns shows, NRA conventions, and other gun venues.

Methodology

To understand the social construction of the gun show, I have been a participant-observer for more than fifty years. Shows in NJ, DE, VA, NC, TN, KY, SD, NM, and most recently GA, comprised the ethnographic data sources. In addition to a review of the literature on gun shows, a number of interviews also were conducted with buyers, sellers, organizers and others who routinely participate. These sources provided numerous insights and information related to the history, organization and conduct of gun shows. Gun shows, like any institution, are comprised of various groups with specific roles, values and norms. These sociological concepts provide the basic framework of the social construction of gun shows.

History

Gun shows have long been a part of American history. In a new and dangerous place, firearms were necessary tools in almost every community in colonial America. The firearms of early America were hand-made pieces or imported from Europe and were sold and traded in almost every community. Permanent firearm brokers were not

common. The sale and exchange of early guns took place in the transient markets of the day. Seasonal fairs were common events where firearms were sold and exchanged (Lingren, & Heather, 2002). The further from the Atlantic coast, the more fairs and meets became important community events. The mountain man rendezvous was but one example of this early form of gun show.

With the advent of the industrial age in middle of the 19th century, firearms were an important commercial product. Companies such as Colt, Winchester and Remington emerged not only as manufacturers but also as marketing agents of firearms (Taylor, 2009). After the Civil War, trade fairs and national and international expositions promoted guns as both military instruments and as tools for personal protection, hunting and leisure sport activities. The Wild West show, the dime novel and the emerging media promoted firearms in the national consciousness. The major firearm companies promoted their products through sharpshooting exhibitions, and sales representatives provided an array of available rifles or pistols for sale. These events, because of the nature of a shooting exhibition, were conducted in open areas with tents or portable venues for product display and sales (McMurty, 2005).

Gun shows continued to be held largely in the south, mid-west and west in the early part of the 20th century. However, the Depression severely restricted their number and frequency. With the limited availability of money, pawnshops became the venue for the sale and exchange of firearms (Taylor, 2009).

After World War II, gun shows made a significant recovery. Increased income, a flood of surplus military firearms and thousands of war veterans created a growing market for firearms and related items. Television and movies increased national interest in rifles, pistols and shotguns. Firearms of the frontier, like the Colt 1873 single-action or Winchester lever-action repeaters, became iconic links to a gloried past. Firearms as tools were now symbolic or even romantic items (Witkowski, 2013).

The popularity of many of these older weapons became inspirations to manufacturers seeking products to replace the lucrative military contracts of WWII. New companies like Sturm-Ruger modernized and popularized the single-action revolver. The cowboy television shows of the 1950s and early 1960s, like Hopalong Cassidy, the Lone Ranger, Gunsmoke, Wyatt Earp and the Rifleman, introduced new generations to the guns that won the West (Nicewanger, 2014).

Gun shows in the late 1950s and early 1960s were combinations of displays for collectors and markets for used guns. An infusion of military surplus arms from WWII provided a significant source of inexpensive weapons with some historical significance. A WWII British Enfield rifle could be purchased for less than $10; German Mauser rifles were being sold for $10-$20 (Smith and Smith, 1973). Shows were increasingly popular and often sponsored by local civic groups.

During this time, commercial shows began to emerge. Gun shows became more diverse, with military surplus arms sharing space with collections and sales of the historic and nostalgic weapons of the West. New guns were now being sold at gun shows by distributors, as well.

> Commercial sales swamped these historical gun sales, as gun shows gradually became gun markets where patriotic purchasers competed with ordinary consumers. (Burdick, 2006:70).

These events now recognized the gun show constituency as a potential political source. Brochures for joining the NRA and state and local gun owner associations and shooting clubs became common. In 1961, the *American Rifleman,* published by the NRA, suggested that local celebrities and individuals from the media be invited to make gun ownership seem respectable and reasonable. In addition, codes of conduct and ethics were encouraged at both commercial and collector shows (Burdick, 2006).

After the Gun Control Act of 1968, which eliminated the mail order sales of firearms and restricted interstate sales to Federal Firearms Licensed dealers, gun shows became more commercial, run by entrepreneurs as a major sales and profit-making activity (ATF, 2005).

In the 1970s, the mega-show emerged. These large-scale events were held in convention centers and often had 4,000 - 5,000 tables and each table rented for between $40 and $65 dollars each. A private citizen seeking to display a small collection or sell a few guns would rent a single table, but a retail distributor might rent 10 or more tables. With attendances of over 4,000 to 5,000 a day and entry fees around $10, gun shows became big business. With revenues in excess of $250,000 a weekend, Burdick (2006) noted that one major gun show organizer made its manager a multimillionaire.

During this time, gun shows became political, with growing concern over restrictive firearms legislation and perceived threats to the Second Amendment (Lund, 2008). The 1980s saw the increased visibility of the Vietnam generation of war veterans who were attracted to the firearms of their conflict. The AR-15, the commercial semiautomatic version of the M-16 service rifle, along with civilian versions of firearms of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese (SKS, AK-47) became the stars of these new gun shows. In addition, with urban unrest and concerns over the Second Amendment and the potential banning of certain rifles and pistols, firearms for personal protection steadily increased in popularity. Semiautomatic pistols were replacing revolvers among the police and the market was inundated with a vast number of new pistols, most of which were made with high capacity magazines. The 6-shooter was replaced by the 17-shooter as the firearm for personal security.

In the 1990s and the early part of the 21st century, gun shows became political battlefields between show organizers, gun lobbyists and anti-gun activists (Wintermute, 2009). Bans on high capacity magazines and assault rifles in the 1990s created a polarization in the gun culture in America. Gun shows became political arenas with

NRA registration tables and tables being manned by Second Amendment activists and concealed carry advocates. If there was a decline in the proportion of tables at a gun show with actual firearms, this was off-set by growing numbers of survivalist and militia-oriented equipment, books, manuals and extreme right-wing literature.

With the removal of the ban on most assault rifles and high capacity magazines, the level of paranoia declined. However, the veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, with their experience with AR and AK-based battle rifle platforms, contribute to the dominance of these types of weapons at most gun shows today. Table upon table of semiautomatic rifles and pistols are evident at every gun show. A recent gun tragedy or school shooting is usually accompanied by a cry for more gun control, which insures that the next show will be a sell-out with long lines waiting to get in (Witkowski, 2013).

As historical events, gun shows have had a long and varied past. From trade or craft fairs to exhibitions and community events, gun shows have become economic, political and social venues which reflect the social constructs of their time and place.

Social Structure

Social structures are usually invisible systems of social organization that coordinate human activities in broadly predictable ways (Ferrante, 2014). Social structures shape relationships with others and prompt people to assume a social identity. They manifest at least four interrelated components: statuses, roles, groups and institutions (Chinoy, 1954).

The social structure of gun shows is based upon the interaction of three distinct statuses: organizers, sellers and buyers. Each plays different roles within the gun show community. Within each of these statuses, a number of sub-groups exist and manifest their roles in a number of unique and interesting ways.

Gun show organizers are a diverse group. As was noted, gun shows evolved from local craft and trade fairs. Even today, in many small communities gun shows are organized or sponsored by *local civic groups or community members*. Many continue to be sponsored by Elks, Ruritans, Lions and other similar civic organizations. Some *private and public schools* in the south and the west have sponsored gun shows. For example, Parkside Church in Camp Verde, AZ (Parkside, 2014) and the Alliance Church in Menomonie, WI recently sponsored gun shows in their communities (AMMO, 2014). Even during the recent surge in school shootings, public and private schools sponsored gun shows. Wasilla High School in AK and Houston High School in TX are just two such schools sponsoring gun shows (Shotgun News, 2014). The profits fund civic or community works like vision-impaired children (Lions Club) or foster child services (Parkside Church).

Increasingly, however, gun show organizers *are individual entrepreneurs or corporations*. Beginning in the late 1980s, commercial shows expanded and started to rent public fairgrounds or conference and exposition facilities (Burdick, 2006). For a

number of years, one of the nation's largest gun shows was the Great Western Gun Show in Los Angeles, but in October, 1999, the County of Los Angeles tried to shut it down. Four years later, after an extensive legal battle, the show's organizers received a $1.6 million settlement for lost revenue (Burdick, 2006), reflecting its significance and financial importance.

On the other side of America, C&E Gun Shows, headquartered in Blacksburg, VA, annually conducts major events in at least nineteen cities throughout the mid-Atlantic and southern regions (C&E, 2014). In the Atlanta area in 2014, gun show sponsors included Gun Runner Shows, Eastman, The Carolina Trader and Gun Shows of the South. Each sponsors multiple shows in the Atlanta region each year. In fact, hardly a weekend goes by that there isn't a gun show somewhere in the Atlanta metropolitan area (Gun Show Trader, 2014).

Gun show organizers contract the venues, schedule the shows and create many of the rules that shape the experience. In most instances, extensive advertising through television, billboards, newspapers and the internet mobilizes and informs gun show participants.

Sellers comprise the second status group found within the socially created environment of the gun show. Like organizers, there are a number of sub-groups that comprise this status. Actually, sellers may be a misnomer. This status group is comprised of *private sellers*, *commercial (FFL) dealers*, *accessories dealers*, *custom knife makers*, *commercial knife dealers, military surplus dealers, coin dealers* and *dealers in print-related publications*. The infamous *Turner Diaries, Anarchist Cookbook* and myriad self-published chapbooks on assorted technical and political publications can be found at most gun shows (Wensink, 2013).

In recent years, the *gypsy trader*, a *private seller* who has one or two firearms displayed on his person with a sign or placard advertising his wares, can be encountered. This seller does not rent a table and thus is a bit of a wild card in this status group. Often, deals are made in the lines waiting to get into shows or in the aisles within the show. As these are private sales, no paperwork is required (ATF, 2010).

On this side of the table, a variety of *special interest groups* rent space at gun shows. Political candidates (Republican, Tea Party, Libertarian) are frequently encountered. Representatives for concealed carry classes, shooter training and gun rights organizations are constants at most gun shows. Military veterans groups, the Wounded Warrior Project, and similar organizations usually have prominent displays. Recently, some political or special interest groups have worked the lines of customers waiting to enter gun shows, some with petitions against a variety of government programs, such as Obamacare.

Thus, the seller-side of the table at most gun shows may be manned by a variety of actual firearm and accessory sellers, along with a diverse array of others who are targeting the gun show constituency for economic and political purposes (Taylor, 2009). This amalgamation of others has increasingly encroached on the firearms focus at some shows. In fact, organizers are increasingly limiting the ratio of non-firearms tables at many gun shows.

Buyers are the largest and most interesting status groups represented at gun shows. A typology of gun show buyers/attendees, however, will always be arbitrary and will not be exclusive or comprehensive (McKinney, 1966). The following social constructs represent a range of attendees encountered at most shows.

One of the largest status sub-groups of buyers is the *informal collector. Informal collectors* are interested in a variety of either modern or period firearms for their personal collections and often own a variety of firearms and attend shows with some specific type of weapon on their interest/shopping list. However, they seem to be open to either a relative bargain or some variation of their genre of firearms. For example, they may like classic revolvers and, with a multitude of variations available, scour the tables looking for British Webleys, Colt 1917s or Smith and Wesson Combat Magnums.

Formal collectors are very selective about a relatively narrow and specific type of firearm. A Remington rolling block collector would be seeking to purchase a quality example of these rifles. Specific calibers and types of rifles or carbines adopted by various countries or sold as sporting items are their focus. These potential buyers quickly peruse the limited number of usual sellers of this type of firearm and then search the tables for random examples of their favorites. Though they usually congregate around some familiar dealers swapping tales of classic items, they also may walk around the shows from time to time checking out the private sellers.

In recent years, the *survivalist* or *prepper sub-group emerged*. These individuals see the potential for some sort of social, political or economic catastrophe in the future. They usually seek out military-style assault rifles and similar weapons and vast amounts of ammunition. The current limited availability of some types of ammunition has been assumed to be related to their hoarding tendencies. Military surplus items are also on their shopping lists.

Very similar to the *survivalists* and *preppers* are the *militia* types who seek similar firearms. They are often seen in camouflage fatigues and seem to focus on the potential for either a government collapse or government oppression against gun rights individuals. They are also found in the right-wing publication areas and clearly advertise their ant-government attitudes by their t-shirt slogans or commando-style attire.

Gun addicts attend almost every gun show within their region on almost a weekly basis. They frequently buy and sell a variety of firearms, seeking to get deals which they brag about to fellow *gun addicts*; the deal is as important as the firearm purchased.

Once acquired, these firearms go into the closet or gun safe for a while, only to be sold or traded at a later date.

Hunters and *recreational* or *competitive* shooters attend gun shows less frequently than some of the other status sub-groups and usually are searching for some specific accessory or to resupply their stock of ammunition or reloading components. They tend to browse the tables in general and usually do not buy a lot of firearms. They either already have the tools of their sport or are upgrading or replacing a specific item. One individual remarked at a gun show that these types of gun enthusiasts usually are at the range or in the field shooting rather than going to shows.

The advent of spouses and girlfriends attending gun shows has contributed to a new sub-group, *gun show couples*. *Gun show couples* are usually one-time or sporadic attendees because men have encouraged the women to get a handgun for personal protection. Pink pistols and revolvers are now common items at most shows.

Though not usually in large numbers, most gun shows will have a few *cowboy characters* in attendance, as either sellers or buyers. They often appear in full cowboy attire, complete with 6-guns, holsters, hats, gloves and significant silver jewelry. They may be Cowboy Action Shooters who compete in authentic or Hollywood-inspired outfits and who are looking for more tools of their trade. Some attend to parade their personas in a firearms-friendly environment and to encourage others to consider their recreational lifestyles.

The audience at a gun show is composed of these and other buyer types. The common thread is their belief in the "right to keep and bear arms" (RTKBA). Some are more politically motivated and active than others, yet they all appreciate and at least understand, if not tolerate, the diverse constituencies. Some are there because they appreciate the historical and cultural tradition of firearms and their place in American history. Others appear to be in pursuit of a hobby or recreational activity. Still others seek to prepare for the future. Regardless of the sub-groups to which gun show buyers/attendees might be categorized, for the most part, they seem to be law-abiding individuals who share a common interest in firearms (Wintermute, 2009).

This constructive typology is an arbitrary attempt to identify some of the status groups within the gun show experience. Like any typology, the attempt to combine vision with precision is fraught with limitations (McKinney, 1966). Many of these categories are not mutually exclusive or exhaustive. Some gun show participants may not fit into any of these arbitrary status groups.

Gun Show Norms

The social norms at gun shows are relatively simple and consistent with proper firearms etiquette. One frequently encountered admonition is, "Keep your mouth shut and your hands in your pockets" (Flayderman, 1995). This is important for new attendees to this citadel of custom and tradition, specifically when dealing with

collectors or individuals with high-end firearms. The exception to this rule is when seeking information on purchasing a weapon from the larger vendors. Asking for advice on a type of firearm provides the sales person with the opportunity to sell an item, and they are interested in meeting the needs of a new gun owner. Women are always accorded the courtesy of inquiry because women are a significant source of new sales.

The cardinal rule of gun show etiquette is always to ask vendor permission before handling a firearm and never point a weapon in the direction of an individual. This is obvious, but in the crowded environment of a gun show it is a significant taboo. Cocking and dry-firing a firearm is another significant violation of gun show norms. Dry firing a weapon results in metal-to-metal contact and may result in the breakage of important parts. With antique or older firearms, this may result in the breakage of parts which may be rare and not easily fixed or replaced. The related norm is, "If you break it, you bought it" (Flayderman, 1995). Causally handling a firearm, such as spinning a cylinder or twirling a revolver or handgun cowboy-style, is also bad manners.

The *gypsy trader,* attending a gun show with a single handgun for sale, often wears the weapon in an open holster. A price tag may or may not be on the weapon and the individual is waiting to be asked to show it to an interested dealer or fellow attendee. This practice has replaced the older custom of carrying it in a paper bag and waiting for the inevitable question, "What is in the bag?"

The *gypsy trader,* however*,* is normally an accepted participant by gun show organizers and sellers. On the other hand, the walking armory with multiple weapons is considered an impediment to the normal flow of traffic and to pedestrian safety and a "cheap bxxxxd" who did not want to spend the money to rent a table. Some organizers have asked these individuals to leave the premises. They also may be encountered outside shows working the lines of customers waiting for admission. However, police or show security may ask them to leave for selling without a permit, loitering or some similar potential charge.

Taking pictures at gun shows has become a controversial subject. Because of concerns about personal security and the security of their merchandise and collections, it is a social taboo and at times a violation of a formal show rule. On the other hand, cell phones and tablets with camera capabilities are often encountered, and some potential buyers email pictures of selected items to friends and families. Pictures of weapons are generally acceptable, as long as sellers or other customers are not photographed. Since a number of law enforcement agencies (ATF) frequent most gun shows, many conservative individuals are concerned that they may be targeted for action or harassment. Similarly, uniformed officers or federal agents in attendance do not want their photographs taken for personal security reasons.

Social norms also govern the behavior of the sellers and vendors. Some of the norms are formal rules, such as having safety ties on all weapons displayed. Another is the requirement to maintain constant supervision of a display or sales table. All vendors

are required to stay until the show closes. One of the important informal social norms is not to denigrate another vendor. Advertising a product or even price is acceptable, but noting that it is better or cheaper than a specific competitor is considered a violation of the informal code of conduct. Another informal norm is that most dealers appear to be armed by openly carrying firearms in a holster. Though most shows restrict any loaded weapons in the facility, except for police or security personnel, this routine display of personal protection appears to be both a security statement and a political one (Wintermute, 2009).

The mores and folkways of gun shows guide and govern behavior. In "101 Gun Show Tips," Andrews (2014) notes a detailed list of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Tip 101 summarizes most of these social norms: "Don't be a jerk – nobody wants to deal with a jerk."

Gun Show Myths

Gun shows have been portrayed as a gathering of violent, paranoid, redneck males who illegally sell guns to violent, paranoid, redneck males. However, most sales of firearms at gun shows involve all of the required legal paperwork normally associated with the sale of a firearm at a gun store. The federal background check is completed online by the dealer over the internet or phone lines made available at the gun show. The federal forms are completed and driver license information checked and recorded (ATF, 2005). The mythical gun show loophole concerns the sales between private sellers and buyers which usually amounts to no more than 10% of the sales conducted at a gun show. In some locales, county or community regulations require private sales to be fully documented (Wintermute, 2009)..

Another myth is that local and federal authorities closely scrutinize those who attend and purchase firearms at gun shows. Although ATF agents have monitored some participants for illegal sales or for the sale of unregistered automatic weapons, most shows are not monitored. The ubiquitous law enforcement representative in the gun show audience is there usually as a gun buyer.

Demographics

Gun show demographics are generally considered to be white, middle-aged, middle-class males (Burdick, 2006). These individuals are married and conservative, both politically and religiously. In earlier times, this was the general demographic profile of a non-urban patriarchal society. With the majority of gun shows in the west, mid-west and the south, this remains the predominant geographical profile of gun show attendees.

Though men remain the major attendees, gun shows have become more diverse in gender composition. The NRA has aggressively pursued women as potential members and as participants in shooting sports. This and other efforts have created

more gender diversity at gun shows. Neuenschwander, Corzine, and Huff-Corzine (2009) have examined how gender has an impact on the type of weapon a gun distributor will try to sell, and in their study they examined perspectives of women participating at gun shows, both selling firearms and purchasing them.

Catheryne Czubek (2013) notes that women like guns for a variety of reasons. Her movie short suggests that some women see guns as tools of empowerment, stress relievers or deadly bodyguards. Regardless of the psychological appeal, for some women guns have become an acceptable interest, which has resulted in increased gender diversity at gun shows.

Although the majority of women attending gun shows are accompanying husbands or boyfriends, they actively peruse and handle some of the firearms. Since many of the manufacturers now market personal protection handguns for women, these are frequently displayed and sold. As previously noted, pink firearms and related items are common (Monahan, 2013).

The number of children with their parents at gun shows also has increased as gun shows regularly advertise themselves as family events. Taking a hint from major merchandisers like IKEA, some gun shows have offered childcare and play areas for younger children.

Gun shows are becoming more racially diverse (Sebastian, 2012). Many shows are conducted in urban or suburban areas which are racially diverse. In the Atlanta region, many shows now attract African-American, Hispanic and Asian-American attendees, with at least 10% of those in attendance being minorities.

Gun shows today are increasingly diverse in their constituencies and reflect the demographics of the regions in which they are conducted.

Virtual Gun Shows

With the advent of e-commerce and online gun auctions, virtual gun shows are now available 24/7. Sites such as Gunbroker.com and GunsAmerica.com are just two of over a dozen major online gun auctions (Gunbroker.com, 2014) (GunsAmerica, 2014). Thousands of firearms are for sale on these and similar sites. Gun seekers can search for almost any new, used or antique firearm, and registered buyers can bid on these weapons. Some start at $1 or less, some have specified minimum starting prices, and others have hidden reserve prices.

Many members of the gun culture regularly visit these sites, some almost daily, looking for specific items or browsing, just like at a gun show. All purchases of modern firearms must be processed through a gun store, and all federal firearms laws regarding background checks and paper work must be completed before a weapon can be acquired. The exception to this rule is the same in all instances: firearms made before 1898 are exempt from FFL requirements and can be shipped directly to a buyer (ATF, 2005).

Some gun enthusiasts use these virtual gun shows to research specific types of weapons and use the auction selling prices as price guidelines when attending shows. In the past, buyers at gun shows often carried copies of shooting references like Shotgun News or *Flayderman's Guide to Antique Firearms.* Today, they reference online sites for pricing information or details about specific firearms on their iPhones or tablets.

Conclusions

Gun shows have long been a part of the American cultural scene, selling firearms, ammunition and related accessories. In addition, gun shows provide a venue for the interaction of a number of subcultural groups. Gun shows are social institutions. They have a history and are uniquely an American institution. They require a democratic environment which respects the rights of citizens to buy and possess firearms. Few countries in the world have such freedoms and such ready access to firearms.

Gun shows reflect the growing diversity in the American population. The traditional demographics of gun show participants are becoming more like that of the general population in which these events are found. Though diversity is becoming more evident within the gun show community, political conservatism remains preeminent.

Gun shows are armed events. Economically, they are a place for the trading or selling of firearms. Socially, many individuals on both sides of the table are openly carrying unloaded firearms. Some are advertising their wares while others are making a political statement about their gun rights.

Gun shows have a strong appeal to a wide range of firearm enthusiasts. As previously noted, they range from *collectors, hunters, gun addicts, anti-government militia, gypsy traders, cowboys and commandos*. One gun show organizer characterized attendees as "the same kind of people you see at the mall" and noted that the shows were popular destinations for local celebrities, from sports heroes to politicians (VPC, 2014).

Gun politics in America has continually supported the possession and availability of firearms to responsible adult citizens in the United States. In fact, the recent liberalization of the availability of concealed weapon permits in many states has encouraged more citizens to go armed. The popular motto, "The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun," has spurred movements in many states to pass legislation expanding the areas in which concealed and even open carry of firearms is permitted. The Georgia Safe Carry Protection Act, which went into effect on July 1, 2014, permits gun owners with a carry permit to legally bring their guns into bars, churches and unsecured public buildings. However, bar owners and churches can decide that they will not allow weapons to be carried on their premises, balancing the

rights of individuals with gun permits and property owners. This act was passed by a 167-3 margin in the Georgia State Legislature (Munford, 2014).

As economic, leisure, political and social events, gun shows are a part of the history and fabric of American life. Sociologically, they are constructions with structure, norms, statuses and roles and represent one aspect of the gun culture of America. Gun shows are defined from the perspectives of the various constituencies. They are social constructs and are part of the cultural of America.

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